
Our Bee utiful Environment

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Buzzing News from the Hive

When people look at bees, they might think they just buzz around, but that's not true. Bees help our environment a lot, and without them, nature could be in serious trouble. During a meeting at school break, we decided to learn more about bees, spread awareness around our school and find ways to help protect them. We asked some teachers and students at our school what they already know about bees, and we also interviewed Dr. Winston Bartolo, who is a doctor and a beekeeper, to learn more from him.

In this article, we will talk about how we can all help local bees and stop them from becoming extinct.

Why is it important to protect our local honeybee?



The Maltese honeybee is endemic to the Maltese islands meaning that it only lives in Malta and has adapted to our climate. Bees are a very important part of our ecosystem and they are nature's helpers who also produce things like honey and beeswax. Their main job is to pollinate and as Dr. Bartolo simply explained it, bees have 'buckets' on their legs to collect pollen from one flower to another and during this process flowers can grow, give seeds and grow fruit or vegetables.

“If you eliminate the bee community there will be no pollination or it will be reduced and if you reduce pollination, plants will die off because they won't be able to create the next generation”.

A bee pollinating a wild flower.

Source: Original Photo

Therefore, without bees we wouldn't have our favourite fruit and vegetables and even chocolate can become rare because chocolate comes from cacao trees. Imagine not having chocolate on shop shelves!

The Maltese Government recognises the bee as a special symbol of Malta's wildlife and natural heritage. On September 24, 2024, the local bee was declared Malta's national insect. This helps protect the bee and makes more people aware of how important it is for the environment.

How and why are bees getting extinct and what can we do to help them?

Bees are having a hard time because their homes are being replaced by buildings. Sometimes the flowers they visit for nectar bloom at the wrong time due to climate change which leaves the bees hungry. Pollution and chemicals found in pesticides harm bees and this can make it harder for them to survive.

We can help bees by planting bright flowers that grow naturally where you live, relocate trees when they are destroyed, learn to protect flowers that bees like, eliminate trash on flowers and wildlife in general, and by putting out a small water dish with some sugar and pebbles in it so they can drink. Growing organic farming will help bees to live in their natural environment free from pesticides and pollution. Beekeepers are helping the Maltese bee from getting extinct, therefore, it is very important to keep this tradition and help people who care about the bee population by consuming honey.

During our interview with the school population, we realised that same as us, everyone is aware of the importance of the bees and that we need to protect them but there is limited knowledge about what the bee does. Some students also associated the bee with stings, therefore we are providing an information leaflet to raise awareness of the bee's job. The leaflet will also provide practical tips.



This is an active bee hive.

Source: Original Photo



Conducting an interview with one of the students in the school community.

Source: Original Photo

What are the local flowers that the bee feeds on?

During our research and when we went to Dr Bartolo's beehive, we could observe several wildflowers that help bees to pollinate. Spring is approaching and it is a good time for Clover (*Trifolium* species) and Wild Thyme (*Thymus capitatus*) to grow. During the summer season there are fewer flowers since the temperature goes higher, however, the Maltese flora produces Capers (*Capparis spinosa*) and Wild Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*). Heath (*Erica multiflora*) and Daisies (*Bellis* species) can be found during the Autumn and Winter season and as we were in Dr Bartolo's field we could also observe bees pollinating on poppies.



A bee pollinating a wild poppy

Source: Original Photo

Therefore, when you are out in the countryside, try your best not to step on flowers for the bees to still have a place to find their nectar. We also decided to plant bee-friendly flowers such as Thyme, Sunflowers, Lavender and Marigold in our school garden to give bees a place to eat. Furthermore, we will be building Bee Hotels made of wooden blocks or bamboo sticks for bees who don't live in hives but in small holes.

Dr. Bartolo explained that a worker bee will only go on the same plant during its lifetime, therefore, if the bee doesn't find that flower it will not live any more so it is important to provide and take care of different species of flowers.



Dr Bartolo showing us the protective gear used when dealing with bees

Source: Original Photo

Fun facts about bees:

- Did you know that worker bees live for 21 days, drones live for 55 -60 days and the queen bee lives up to 5 years?
- Bees have 5 eyes and they can see all the colours except for red.
- Bees dance to communicate.
- Not all bees sting.

Every small action matters. If we all protect nature and be more mindful, we can make the world a better place. Bees may be tiny but their actions are mighty. They help grow food, keep nature alive and make the world more beautiful.

Take care and love bees!

For more information follow this link: [Information Leaflet.docx](#)

References

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- Foundation for the Conservation of the Maltese Honey Bee. (2022). The Maltese honey bee (Apis mellifera ruttneri). [Foundation for the Conservation of the Maltese Honey Bee – Discover how the Foundation for the Conservation of the Maltese Honey Bee protects Malta’s endemic bee through research, education, and advocacy.](#)